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TROILUS ON PREDESTINATION

A cardinal sin of the middle ages according to the average modern critic is its long-windedness; another is its proneness to digression. As a beautifully flagrant example of both these faults is usually cited the long speech on predestination in the fourth book of Chaucer's *Troilus*. Professor Lounsbury's statement of the case may serve as typical. He is talking of the "poet's passion for dialectics"¹:

"With the grossest instance of the failure on the part of Chaucer to comply with the requirements of his art, I pass from this branch of the subject. His special fondness for the questions connected with the doctrine of free-will and predestination has been mentioned in a previous chapter. It is not always a misfortune. In the Knight's tale it is made conducive to the general effect. In the tale of the Nun's Priest it relieves the situation by its contrast between the greatness of the questions involved and the pettiness of the incidents upon which it is brought to bear. But in 'Troilus and Cressida' it is an intrusion of the worst kind. The hero is in an extremity of grief at the enforced departure of his mistress from Troy. He is so fallen into despair that he cares not whether he lives or dies. But his method of deploring the coming calamity is unexampled on the part of a lover. He enters into a discussion with himself upon the doctrine of predestination. Fully one hundred and twenty lines he takes up with establishing the proposition that everything that happens, happens by necessity. The passage is a versification of the argument on the subject of God's foreknowledge and man's free-will that is contained in the fifth book of the treatise of Boethius. It utterly interferes with the movement of the story. It is tacked to it by the flimsiest of fastenings. It is lacking in some manuscripts, though unfortunately not the best ones. Still, its absence from these makes it reasonable to suppose that its addition was an afterthought which in this case was not of the wisest. The bad taste exhibited by the poet in such passages will be conceded by all. His most fervent admirers would be the readiest to admit the justice of the censure."²

From the attacks,³ of which Lounsbury's criticism is representative, we hear that the monologue of Troilus has little to do with the

¹ *Studies in Chaucer*, New York, 1892, vol. III, pp. 372 ff.

² *Ibid.*, III, p. 374 f.

³ Criticism of the passage finds a beginning in the *Étude* of Sandras (1859, p. 45):—"Le plus souvent Chaucer se laisse aller à un ton bourgeois ou pédantesque qui fait disparate avec les endroits où il copie son modèle." See H. Morley, *English Writers*, London, 1890, p. 197, who speaks of the hundred lines of reasoning "from Bradwardine," and thinks that then "follow the four lines of lament really proper to the occasion." See also A. W. Ward, *Chaucer (Eng. Men of Letters)*, Morley), New York, p. 92, who speaks of the predestination theme here "pedantically put, perhaps, and as it were dragged in violently

main thread of the plot; that it hinders the progress of the narrative; that it is absurd in the mouth of its speaker; and finally that the passage is an anachronism.⁴ I shall try to answer these points separately, but they may all be summarized as taking issue with the dramatic fitness of the speech.

Most critics will agree that Chaucer seldom rambles on to no purpose. That he very well knew the principle of selection in art is made evident again and again in his poetry when he brings us sharply back to the main issue. On this matter we may quote from the *Troilus* itself:

"But now, paraunter, som man wayten wolde
That every word, or sonde, or look, or chere
Of Troilus that I rehersen sholde,
In al this whyle, unto his lady dere;
I trowe it were a long thing for to here;
Or of what wight that stant in swich disioynte,
His wordes alle, or every look, to poynte."⁵

Compared with the verse of some of his contemporaries Chaucer's lines are crammed; and he cannot, he says, waste time by setting down every detail of the speeches of Troilus to his lady. Yet in the very next book he gives up one hundred and twenty lines to the argument on predestination which Troilus utters to himself. Nothing even remotely corresponding appears in the *Filostrato*,⁶ and, as Lounsbury has said, we find it in the best manuscripts of the *Troilus*.⁷

by means of a truncated quotation from Boethius." R. K. Root, *The Poetry of Chaucer*, Boston and New York, 1906, p. 118, is unique in thinking that the speech is in character, but adds that it is long and possibly an artistic blemish. See T. R. Price, *PMLA*, XI, p. 311: "The passage is the chief artistic blemish." See Manly, *Kittredge Anniv. Papers*, p. 77: Chaucer "did not restrain within proper limits the ideas brought up by association (note the famous passage on predestination in the *Troilus*)." Also Fansler, *Chaucer and the Roman de la Rose*, New York, 1914, p. 212 f., "There is no real occasion for the discussion here." Cf. Legouis, *Chaucer*, Paris, 1910, p. 120, on Pandarus's borrowings from Boethius. See Tatlock, *Dev. and Chron.*, p. 8.

⁴ Warton, *Hist. of Eng. Poetry*, New Edition, London, 1824, vol. II, p. 224, makes this point.

⁵ *TC* III, ll. 491-497.

⁶ Cf. *Il Filos.*, IV, st. XXX ff.; and st. CIX.

⁷ Professor Tatlock put it in his later version of the *Troilus*. See *Dev. and Chron.*, pp. 8-9. Professor Root's recent searching investigations and analysis of the readings in the manuscripts leave little doubt that the passage was a

Still it is possible that Chaucer's style may be terse enough and that he did not insert the passage with total unconsciousness of any motive. Interested in a certain conception of philosophy, he may have seized an occasion to preach. After the story itself had grown cold for him, he picked up his manuscript and saw in one of the most intense scenes of the tragedy a splendid opportunity to point a moral. The passage has been defended in this way, and from various appreciations we learn that the poet is here trying to edify his readers or that he is here giving us his own spiritual doctrine.⁸ For example we are told that the monologue "has a

later addition (see the *The Textual Tradition of Chaucer's Troilus*, Chaucer Soc., London 1916, pp. 216 ff.) He is supported by the evidence of those MSS. in which stanza 108 appears after 105. If this theory is true, then it is evident that Chaucer went out of his way to insert the passage; and that he never changed his mind about it seems to be clear from the fact that it was definitely incorporated. One or two difficulties remain, however, in the face of the almost overwhelming proof: The phrase "disputing with himself in this matere," which is found in stanza 155 intact in the Cambridge Gg Ms., refers back very neatly indeed to the long argument. And Pandarus's "O mighty god in trone," gains added power when it picks up Troilus's "almight love in trone" as a prayer to the all-powerful one who is responsible for all the events of this world, good and bad alike. But stanza 155 is omitted in Harl. 1239 and Harl. 2392. and Pandarus's echo is left without its antecedent. Therefore we are led to suspect that the Cambridge Gg represents a version which once had the passage. And to imagine that Chaucer inserted the long passage in a context like that of the Harleian MSS. and thus worked the reverse process of putting in an anticipation of Pandarus's line is to compliment the poet with an almost supernatural skill. Professor Root explains the mechanics of the difficulty well enough by his suggestion of a threefold development: (1) a version where stanzas 136 and 156 follow uninterruptedly; (2) a version where Chaucer intended to add the Boethian speech and so added st. 155 and changed the end of 136, yet had not time to insert the speech itself, and in the meantime two copies (the ancestors of St. John's College and Cambridge Gg) were made; (3) the final version with the passage. Apart from some questions raised by parts of this explanation, it neglects the point of the extraordinary felicity of the insertion of 155, where, although the reverse process would be easy, the anticipation of Pandarus's light reference would be almost too clever. Furthermore, Root admits (p. 219) that in his explanation there is no accounting for the omission of the passage including st. 155 in Harl. 2392.

* See R. Bell (quoted by Furnivall, *Athenæum*, Aug. 15, 1868, p. 211. Bell's edition of Chaucer, from which Furnivall got the quotation, is not accessible to me.) Bell's statement is as follows: "In this passage, he (Chaucer) exhibits a power of stating logical arguments with clearness and accuracy in verse which none of his successors, except Dryden, has ever approached. The whole essence of the question is preserved in these few stanzas." Ten Brink,

special interest in showing us the settled determinism of Chaucer's philosophical conception of human life."⁹ Views of this sort presuppose, to my mind, a most remarkable idea of Chaucer himself. But no matter how the critics imagine the poet, the views themselves rest on several assumptions which can be readily tested: first, that the monologue is so placed that we are justified in lifting it from its context and in regarding it as one of the moral conclusions of the poem; secondly, that in Troilus's speech the poet does give a proper and adequate statement of the problem; thirdly, that in whatever he presents here, he is perfectly serious.¹⁰

In support of these assumptions we have what is extremely important—almost contemporary evidence.¹¹ In the *Testament of Love*, the lover asks the Goddess of Love whether, since everything happens through God's knowledge and takes its being from Him, God is not therefore the author of bad deeds as well as of good:

"Quod Love, 'I shal telle thee, this lesson to lerne. Myne owne trewe servaunt, the noble philosophical poete in Englissh . . . in a tretis that he made of my servant Troilus, hath this mater touched, and at the ful this question assoyled. Certaynly, his noble sayinges can I not amende; in goodnes of

Hist. of Eng. Lit., translated by W. C. Robinson, N. Y., 1893, vol. II, pp. 92-3, at a loss for any other way to account for the passage, says: "It is his tragic intensiveness that leads the poet into such depths, and makes him express ideas in sonorous verses, which agitated deeply the most eminent minds of the age, ideas which touch strongly on the doctrine of predestination such as Wyclif conceived it in following Augustine and Bradwardine. Not unworthy of notice is this coincidence between the great poet at the height of his artistic maturity and the great reformer who was then in Lutterworth closing the great life account of this thoughts and actions." See also Courthope, *Hist. of Eng. Poetry*, New York, 1895, vol. I, p. 262, who says that Chaucer used Boethius for a moral tone to emphasize the stages of the action. J. S. P. Tatlock, *Mod. Philol.*, III, p. 370, note 3, says that the passage is "greatly out of place where it occurs, and therefore indicative of Chaucer's personal interest;" and on page 370, he speaks of Chaucer's "leaning to determinism." And see Carleton F. Brown, *PMLA*, XIX, p. 128, n.1, setting forth a view similar to that held by ten Brink.

⁹ T. R. Price, *PMLA*, XI, p. 311.

¹⁰ As for example one critic has thought he was in the similar passage in the *Nonne Preestes Tale*: see Grace Hadow, *Chaucer and his Times*, London, 1914, p. 99.

¹¹ The *Testament of Love* is dated 1387 by Bradley, *Athenaeum*, 1897, I, p. 184; also by Skeat, *The Chaucer Canon*, Oxford, 1900, p. 97.

gentil manliche speche, without any maner of nycetè of storiers imaginacion, in witte and in good reson of sentence he passeth al other makers. In the boke of Troilus, the answer to thy question mayst thou lerne."¹²

Two centuries later, Speght, in his second reprint in 1602 of Thynne's edition of Chaucer, puts at the head of the *Troilus* as its argument: "In which discourse Chaucer liberally treateth of the divine purveiaunce."¹³ These quotations seem to indicate that Usk and later Speght thought that Chaucer was pretty much in earnest in the discussion. This view complicates my problem; for if Chaucer intended to present a really adequate account of the question of predestination and if he intended the monologue to be sufficient unto itself, then he was not so likely to keep the passage true to its dramatic setting. Therefore, while this general defence in a measure would answer the criticism that Chaucer's lines are meaningless in themselves, it would not in any way refute the objection that the monologue is totally out of place where we find it.

What is the relation of Troilus's speech to the main thought of the poem? To decide this point we must first make very sure of just what Troilus has in mind. What he says may be summarized as follows: (a) he gives the various attitudes taken by different clerks toward the subject of predestination and free will; (b) then he comes to his own conclusions on the subject—viz. (1) whether God has divine foreknowledge of events, or whether He foresees things because they are foreordained, events are surely destined to happen; and therefore (2) man has no free will. In the course of his argument Troilus is not vitally concerned whether God or fate is responsible for the "necessity" of affairs, but he seems to incline to the former view.¹⁴

¹² *Test. of Love*, III, ch. IV, ll. 248 ff. in Skeat, *Chaucerian and Other Pieces*, p. 123.

¹³ *Wks. of Chaucer*, 1602, sig. Bb 5 recto. For this reference I am indebted to Mr. G. L. Hamilton's note: *Indebt. of Chaucer to Guido* etc., New York, 1903, p. 18, n.2. Mr. Kenneth P. Kempton, who took the trouble to look up this matter for me in the original editions in the Harvard Library, thinks that Mr. Hamilton is in error in his additional reference to Speght's edition of 1598.

¹⁴ The idea of pure necessity in the speech of Troilus seems to amount to a conception of fate or destiny, and the principle of its operation is several times touched upon: e.g. ll. 999-1001; ll. 1048-50 (original with Chaucer); ll. 1051-53. But Troilus does not seem to be quite willing to accept pure necessity, as he shows in stanza 153.

It is often pointed out that in the passage we are studying Chaucer merely versified parts of Boethius,¹⁵ which he already knew in the original and had himself translated. There in the *Consolatio* the speaker asks whether there is any such thing as free will. Lady Philosophy assures him that there is. The speaker then proceeds to oppose this idea with the doctrine of divine prescience and predestination in much the same manner as Troilus; but he goes even further and carries the idea to what seems its logical conclusion:

. . . "in ydel ben ther thanne purposed and bihight medes to gode folk, and peynes to badde folk, sin that no moevinge of free corage voluntarie ne hath nat deserved hem. . . and it sholde seme thanne, that thilke thing is alderworst, which that is now demed for aldermost iust and most rightful, *that is to seyn*, that shrewes ben punissed, or elles that gode folk ben y-gerdoned: the whiche folk, sin that hir proppre wil ne sent hem nat to that oon ne to that other . . . but constraineth hem certain necessitee of thinges to comen: thanne no shollen ther nevere ben, ne nevere weren, vyce ne vertu, but it sholde rather ben confusioun of alle desertes medled with-ouen discrecioun . . . than folweth it, that oure vyces ben referred to the maker of alle good. . . . Thanne is ther no resoun to hopen *in god*, ne for to preyen *to god*; for what sholde any wight hopen *to god*, or why sholde he preyen *to god*, sin that the ordinaunce of destinee, which that ne may nat ben inclyned, knitteth and streineth alle thinges that men may desiren?"¹⁶

Removing the burden of sin from mankind in this way would, I say, seem to be the logical goal of Troilus's speech; but Chaucer, who must have been aware of this, prevented any such interpretation by a touch that proves itself to be quite deliberate. He omitted the sentiments which I have quoted, and borrowed instead, for the beginning of Troilus's speech, some of the sound doctrine from the discourse of Lady Philosophy herself:

. . . "god seeth every thing, out of doutaunce,
And hem desponeth, thourgh his ordenaunce,
In hir merytes sothly for to be,
As they shul comen by predestinee."¹⁷

This passage is lifted from a section in Boethius different from that required for the rest of Troilus's speech, and it shows how carefully Chaucer composed the long monologue. Troilus, then, believes

¹⁵ See Boethius, *Cons.*, lib. V, pr. 2 and 3. See Skeat's notes on the *Troilus Complete Works*, second ed., Oxford, 1900, II, p. 490 f. He quotes the Latin.

¹⁶ Chaucer's translation, Skeat, *Complete Works*, II, Boethius, Book V, Prose III, ll. 109-133. I have omitted most of the glosses.

¹⁷ TC, IV, ll. 963-966. See Boethius, Chaucer's Trans., Bk. V, Pr. II, ll. 30-33. Note the setting.

that although ruin is his destiny, God has so arranged matters that it is also what he deserves; although mankind is not originally responsible for its merits, or defects, yet ultimately punishment or reward are quite *apropos*. In other words Troilus wishes to indicate that he is not responsible for the present disaster, but he wishes to do so piously. There is a kind of self-pitying humility in his attitude. He will not trouble to blame anybody else, God or man, so long as it be acknowledged that he himself has been opposing unfair odds and that he has never really had a chance—with all due respect to the Creator's sense of justice.

We need not be disturbed by the logical inconsistencies involved in this view. In a way they are no worse than those involved in the greater issue—that of divine prescience and human free will—but even if they were it would not matter, for, if I am right, the speech is not intended as a sample of dialectic fireworks but as an outburst of human emotion.

In still another place Chaucer deviates from his source. Although it does not seem to be generally remembered, ten Brink has already observed that the ultimate conclusion of the whole problem in Troilus's speech differs from that reached in Boethius,¹⁸ that in the *Consolatio* when the speaker has finished, Lady Philosophy gives a rather striking reply:

. . . "I axe why thou wenest that thilke resouns of hem that assoilen this question ne ben nat speedful y-nough ne sufficient: the which *solucioun*, or the *whiche resoun*, for that it demeth that the prescience nis nat cause of neces-sitee to thinges to comen, that ne weneth it nat that freedom of wil be destorbed or y-let by prescience."¹⁹

¹⁸ *Studien* (Münster, 1870) p. 75 f: "Die erwidern der philosophie, welche das räthsel aufzuheben, den zweifel zu beseitigen sucht hat Chaucer unübersetzt gelassen." He does not attempt to explain this phenomenon: "Ich will nun gern einräumen, dass diese erörterung namentlich durch ihre breite und ihre schulgerechte form in der gegebenen situation sich sehr fremdartig ausnimmt, und unternehme nicht, wie ausgezeichnet die verse auch sind, in welche Chaucer die prosa des Boethius übertragen, die stelle vom ästhetischen standpunkte auszurechtfertigen. Soviel aber wird man nun wenigstens eingestehen müssen, dass es kleine blasse laune von seiten des dichters war, wenn er seinen helden in einem so bedeutungsvollen moment, . . . gedanken aussprechen liesz, welche einer das ganze gedicht durchziehenden anschauung angehören." We have already seen how Ten Brink interprets this situation: note 8 above. See also the note by Carleton F. Brown, *PMLA*, XIX, p. 128, n.1.

¹⁹ Boethius, Book V, Prose IV, ll. 16-21.

The speaker finally admits his mistake,²⁰ but Troilus in contrast holds to his fatalistic views and Chaucer does not give us any further solution of the problem.

It used to be held, however, that in this passage Chaucer had more prominently in mind another work on predestination and free will, and that there he borrowed his theories of determinism supported by a more or less orthodox scholastic.²¹ This different authority was Thomas Bradwardine's ponderous treatise *De Causa Dei*, written against the surviving heresies of Pelagius. But the passages in Bradwardine which suggest something like the argument of Troilus are only vaguely similar and then similar in content not in style.²² Furthermore there are some serious discrepan-

²⁰ *Ibid.*, V, pr. IV, ll. 32-35; ll. 64-68.

²¹ In his introduction to the *De Causa Dei*, Sir Henry Savile pointed out Chaucer's acquaintance with the work with reference to the lines on predestination in the NPT: "Is cum esset philosophicis Theologicisque haud mediocriter imbutus, ac hasce Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi lucubrationes jam tum recens emissas, ut videtur, pervolvisset, pro more suo jocos serie intertexens, in fabella quadam Cantuariensi arduam de Dei praescientia, rerumque contingentia quaestionem obiter attingit," Savile, DCD, London, 1618, Lectori a 3. He quotes Chaucer ("socco suo indutum")—the direct reference in the NPT to Bradwardine. Urry, in his edition of 1721, in the "Life of Chaucer," refers to Savile's note and relates it to the passage in the *Troilus*: "He (Chaucer) seems by this passage (that in the fourth book of the *Troilus*), and that in the Priest's Nonne's Tale . . . to be so well versed that Sir Henry Savil thinks he had perused Archbishop Bradwardine's learned book *De Causa Dei* published at that time." Urry's note might easily be mistaken to mean that he himself and Savile too considered the DCD the source of the passage in the *Troilus*. See Warton, *Hist. of Eng. Poetry*, II, p. 224. Cf. G. L. Hamilton, *The Indebtedness of Chaucer to Guido* etc., p. 18 and note 2. Tyrwhitt in his edition of Chaucer (*Poetical Works*, p. 457) pointed out that in the *Troilus* passage Chaucer was really indebted to Boethius. Later certain scholars seem to have forgotten this note: e.g. Furnivall, *Athen.*, Aug. 15, 1868, p. 211; and they were corrected by ten Brink, *Studien*, p. 75.

²² See e.g., DCD, III, cap. I (Savile, p. 638, wrongly printed 362, —D) where he quotes Augustine: "His et talibus testimonijs diuinorum eloquiorum, satis, quantum existimo, manifestatur, operari Deum in cordibus hominum ad inclinandas eorum voluntates quocunque voluerit, siue ad bona pro sua misericordia, siue ad mala pro meritis eorum;" cf. TC, IV, ll. 964-66. Compare also DCD, I, cap. XXVIII ((p. 267 C): "Quapropter et voluntates nostrae tantum valent, quantum Deus eas valere voluit, atque praesciuit, et ideo quicquid valent certissime valent, et quod facturae sunt, ipsae omnino facturae sunt, quia valituras ac facturas ille praesciuit, cuius praescientia falli non potest." He supports this principle with a reference to Boethius. And finally compare

cies between the thought of Troilus and that of Bradwardine in general. The latter does subordinate the human will to Necessity and both of these to the Divine Will:

"Si vis omnium quae fecit *et* quae passus est veram scire necessitatem, scito omnia ex necessitate fuisse, quia ipse voluit, voluntatem verò eius nulla praecessit necessitas: voluntatem, inquam, eius diuinam nulla parecessit necessitas, sed humanam."²³

But he proceeds to demonstrate that necessity and freedom, and merit, chance, and fortune, are not mutually exclusive. He states his thesis as follows:

"Necessitas et libertas, ac meritum casusque et fortuna invicem non repugnant; de fati quoque praescientia, praedestinationis et gratiae cum libero arbitrio ac merito concordia generali."²⁴

In this view he is clearly in opposition to Troilus and he continues more and more emphatically to be so.²⁵ For example, Bradwardine says that Necessity attains moral power only as man submits his will to it, and sin and virtue are matters directly connected with the willing:

"Ex his autem euidenter apparet, quod licet quis necessitatus fuerit ad faciendum quicquam boni vel mali, si tamen necessitationem illam ignoret, et faciat hoc voluntariè et liberè, quantum in *eo* est, meretur."²⁶

At times, perhaps, Bradwardine seems to place more emphasis on the power of God than on the freedom of the human will,²⁷ but that is because his work is directed especially against the Pelagians. This sect believed on the one hand that where man had no power he was sinless: obligation was, they said, in accordance

Bradwardine's proposition, III, cap. I: "Quod Deus potest necessitare quodammodo omnem voluntatem creatam ac liberum actum suum, et ad liberam cessationem ab actu." It is quite possible that Chaucer read Bradwardine's discussion for the *Troilus* but decided to model his own treatment on Boethius.

²³ III, cap. I, p. 640 B.

²⁴ Page 640, *Corollarium*.

²⁵ Compare too (p. 643 B) his reference to that "error": "dicentium hominem non posse peccare, quia habet necessitatem vel impossibilitatem faciendi vel non faciendi quodcunque; quare, ut arguunt, non habet liberum arbitrium, nec culpam, nec laudem," etc. And see lib. II, cap. III and IV.

²⁶ III, cap. I, p. 644 B.

²⁷ See. e. g., lib. II, cap. XX.

with ability, and so they diminished the sinner's responsibility.²⁸ On the other hand they laid great stress on the freedom of man's will, and in so doing went to heretical extremes, diminishing the power of God.²⁹ It is against this latter element in particular that Bradwardine writes.³⁰

Chaucer might have been influenced by such a placing of emphasis, did not Bradwardine bring out very clearly and emphatically too his belief in free will:

"Quare manifestum est, quia si virtus coelestis vel fatum, vel quicumque alius motor extrinsecus moueret animas humanas ad volendum vel nolendum, non auferet eis dominium *et* imperium, vel auctoritatem suarum voluntatum *et* actionum, cum nec vim, nec violentiam nec coactionem eis inferre ad haec possunt: *et* hoc est propter libertatem atque imperiositatem voluntatis, propter quas nec coactionem sustinet, nec receptibilis est vllo modorum ipsius."³¹

It lies not in our stars that we are underlings; we have a complete and free choice to do what we will. Bradwardine reconciles this choice with divine prescience in the following manner:

²⁸ These doctrines are well recognized as Pelagian: see for example, J. Alzog, *Manual of Universal Church History*, translated by Pabisch and Byrne, Cincinnati, 1874, vol. I, §116 (3), p. 575; also A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology*, Philadelphia, 1907, p. 600, C (c).

²⁹ There is no need here of going into their particular definition of free will. On the point of the relation between man and God, see J. Keftan, *Dogmatik*, Tübingen and Leipzig, 1901 (in the *Grundriss der Theol. Wiss.*, Fünfter Theil, I Bd.), §37 (3); also W. A. Brown, *Christian Theology in Outline*, New York, 1907, p. 245; G. P. Fisher, *History of the Christian Church*, New York, 1893, p. 136. For direct evidence on the subject, see St. Augustine, Migne, *Pat. Lat.*, Aug. X, *Contra Duas Epistolas Pel.*, I, col. 570 f., cap. XXIV: "Tantumque constituunt in libero arbitrio, quo in profundum demersus est homo, ut eo bene utendo dicant hominem mereri gratiam: cum nemo bene illo uti possit, nisi per gratiam. Quae non secundum debitum redditur, sed Deo gratis miserante donatur. Parvulos autem ita contendunt esse jam salvos, ut a Salvatore audeant negare salvandos." Also Aug. II, col 765: "Tantum enim dicunt valentem," etc.

³⁰ See his *Praefatio*: he says he has been asked to write, for "quot, Domine, hodie cum Pelagio, pro Libero Arbitrio contra gratuitam gratiam tuam pugnant, *et* contra Paulum pugilem gratiae spirituales? Quot etiam hodie gratuitam gratiam tuam fastidiunt, solumque Liberum Arbitrium ad salutem sufficere stomachantur? aut si gratiam vtantur, vel perfunctorie necessariam eam simulant," etc.

³¹ III, cap. I, p. 644 A and B.

"Atque ita qui omnes rerum causas praesciuit, profecto in eis causis etiam nostras voluntates ignorare non potuit, quas nostrorum operum causas esse praesciuit."³²

God can foresee not only our actions but the causes of them: he knows our wills. So Bradwardine answers the argument of Troilus.

Let us remind ourselves at this point that Bradwardine's lifetime was not so very long before Chaucer's, that in fact it extended well into the fourteenth century.³³ Orthodoxy had lasted as long as that at least. In opposing the Pelagians, the Church did emphasize the grace of God, but still it maintained a belief and a very pronounced belief in human free will.³⁴ The Church Fathers held to a faith in divine predestination of human affairs, but they reconciled it with human free will none the less.³⁵ Those who held independent

³² I, cap. XXVIII, p. 267 B.

³³ See Savile's introduction (*Lectori*, a 2 verso and foll.): Bradwardine was born c. 1290; went to Merton College, Oxford; was Procurator in Oxford in 1325; he was named Doctor Profundus by the Pope; became Archbishop of Canterbury; died October, 1349. Some other details in Savile's account are added from Bale and Leland; but the general period of Bradwardine's activity is all that concerns us here and there seems to be no dispute about the limits assigned above. See Lechler, *De T. Brad, Commentatio*, Lipsiae 1862, p. 4 f.; Lounsbury, *Studies*, II, p. 382 f.; and Morley, *English Writers*, IV, 61.

³⁴ In writing against the ideas of the Manicheans, Augustine of course brings out this point. See Migne, *Pat. Lat.*, Aug. VIII, *Disput. Sec. Diei*, col. 121: "Quod liberum arbitrium si non dedisset Deus, iudicium puniendi nullum justum esse posset, nec meritum recte faciendi, nec praeceptum divinum ut ageretur poenitentia de peccatis; nec ipsa indulgentia peccatorum, quam nobis Deus per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum donavit." Col. 122: "Ego dico peccatum non esse, si non propria voluntate peccatur." Yet divine aid is necessary for good living: see Aug. III, col. 1778 (10); X, 202 (4). See also St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa*, Rome, 1886, vol. I, *Quaestio LXXXIII*, Art. I: "Respondeo dicendum, quod homo est liberi arbitrii alioquin frustra essent consilia, exhortationes, praecepta, prohibitiones, praemia, et poenia."

³⁵ In one of his discussions, Augustine quotes Jerome as follows: "'Liberi Arbitrii nos condidit Deus, nec ad virtutem, nec ad vitia necessitate trahimur; alioquin ubi necessitas, nec corona est.' quis non cognoscat? quis non toto corde suscipiat? quis aliter conditam humanam neget esse naturam? Sed in recte faciendo ideo nullum est vinculum necessitatis, quia libertas est charitatis," (Aug. X, cap. LXV, col. 286.) Cf. Boethius, Chaucer's translation, V, pr. II, ll. 3-5 (Skeat, p. 129). See also St. Thomas, *Summa*, *Quaest. XXIII*, Art. VI: "Praedestinatio certissime et infallibiliter consequitur suum effectum, nec tamen imponit necessitatem, ut scilicet effectus ejus ex necessitate proveniat . . . Sic igitur et ordo praedestinationis est certus, et tamen libertas arbitrii non tollitur, ex qua contingenter provenit praedestinationis effectus."

views on these points would be considered heretical and, like the Lollards, would be marked extraordinary. If Chaucer introduced such alien doctrines into the moral of his poem, he must have been deliberate in the fact and he must have been conscious that he was thereby making his work conspicuously revolutionary. The fourth book of *Troilus and Criseyde* would indeed be a strange place to tuck away such a heterodox confession!

Does the prevailing sentiment of the poem bear out this view? Is the doctrine at the end of the poem consistent with Troilus's fatalism? After finishing his revision of Boccaccio's story, Chaucer added a passage from another tale by the Italian poet, borrowing from the *Teseide* to describe the ascent of Troilus to heaven and thus giving us Troilus's final realization of his own mistake. The youth sees that here on earth our deeds follow our "blinde lust" (pleasure)³⁶ when we really ought to set our hearts on heaven; and the poet warns "yonge fresshe folkes" to realize the emptiness of worldly frivolity and turn from it to God.³⁷ Evidently, then there was some choice in human affairs and Troilus suffered from having chosen to meddle in things that were not worth-while. In his early speech at the crisis of his tragedy, he merely gave utterance to what seem to be extremely typical ideas for such a time: he exonerated himself of all guilt for his disaster so that he might pity himself the more justly. This after all is but "the excellent foppery of the world, that, when we are sick in fortune,—often the surfeits of our own behavior,—we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and the stars, as if we were villains on necessity, fools by heavenly compulsion." There is no reason for thrusting this foppery upon Chaucer himself. Furthermore it is quite characteristic of Troilus, who all through the poem, at every turn of the plot, blames Fate or Fortuna for whatever occurs.³⁸

³⁶ V, ll. 1821 ff.

³⁷ V, ll. 1835. On all this view of the tragedy, see the statement in Kittredge, *Chaucer and his Poetry*, pp. 142 ff., where, however, this application of the ending is not found. The problem of such a thing as guilt in the *Troilus* is far from simple, and after all Troilus does not suffer eternally for his folly; but he does suffer for a while, he learns that it is folly, and we are warned against "these wretched worldes appetytes." The complexity of the situation is a phase of its great humanity, and none knew that better than Chaucer, who wrote: "Swich fyn his lust, swich fyn hath his noblesse."

³⁸ See for example: I, ll. 837; III, ll. 733; IV, ll. 260; IV, ll. 1192; V, ll. 1699. Chaucer found considerable Fortune material in his source, the *Filostrata*-

The speech is, therefore, dramatically appropriate to Troilus but does not voice the moral of the poem as a whole. To take this passage as representative of Chaucer's own ideas is as logical as to take Shakspeare's "Out, out brief candle" as evidence that the dramatist believed in universal suicide. Troilus denied the existence of free will, but in reality his only bondage has been the subjection to his own folly. As Boethius puts it:

"For after that they han cast away hir eyen fro the light of the sovereyn soothfastnesse to lower thinges and derke, anon they derken by the cloude of ignoraunce and ben troubled by felonous talents; to the whiche talents whan they aprochen and asenten, they hepen and encreasen the servage which they han ioyned to hem-self; and in this manere they ben caitifs fro hir propre libertee."³⁹

Obviously, however, Chaucer could not state his moral in this fashion; for the *Troilus* is not a gloomy, heavy tragedy, nor does the love affair consist in complete abandonment to "lowe thinges and derke"! Such things are a matter of degree. I have no doubt that Chaucer's own sympathies were with his hero, and that he enjoyed the lovers and was heart and soul with them in their difficulties; but I believe that his sense of moral values was never jostled by his emotional interest and that he never dreamed for an instant of a code of "higher morality." He does not say, to be sure, that Troilus had cast his "eyen fro the light of the sovereyn soothfastnesse," but he does bid young folk to do the opposite:

"And of your herte up-casteth the visage
To thilke god that after his image
You made."⁴⁰

We are now left with the problem of Usk's complimentary reference to Troilus's speech. Usk's comment that here Chaucer

to, which is really a sentimental tragedy due to the workings of the element of chance; but he deliberately altered his version of the story by adding the Christian Conception of Fortuna the "executrice of wierdes": see III, ll. 617 ff., and V, ll. 1541 ff. In his poem, therefore, the whole course of events, in so far as it is outside of human power, moves according to the rule of Jove. Whatever are the motives of the guiding force, it is not capricious; and I intend to show in this article how largely the element of human will enters into, and was thus meant to enter into, the development of the tragedy. Troilus and Criseyde become responsible for their own doom. To the quotation from *Leas* above, one may add the speech of Argante in the *Fourberies of Scapin* (Act I, Sc. iv).

³⁹ Chaucer's Boethius, V, pr. II, ll. 24-30.

⁴⁰ V, ll. 1838-40.

has "at the ful this question (of predestination) assoyled," must mean one of two things, if it is sincere. Either Usk must refer to the solution given by the entire poem and so not specifically to the monologue of Troilus, and this seems improbable; or he must have taken the speech to be sufficient unto itself because he, Thomas Usk, was a fatalist. The latter possibility is not promising when we read one of the speaker's remarks in the *Testament*: "So that now me thinketh, that prescience of god and free arbitrement withouten any repugnaunce acorden."⁴¹ The safest inference, to my mind, is that Usk's reference is not based upon any deep consideration at all, but that it is merely a sample of his skill in unctious flattery.⁴² As to Speght's reference later, it is obvious that that does not bear on the question either way except in so far as it shows Speght's own interest in the passage.

What, then, were Chaucer's own ideas on the subject of fate and free will? I cannot here enter into this problem fully, because it would require a study of his use of Fate, Fortune, and divine predestination in the schemes of all his works. He certainly seems to have had a steady interest in the question, perhaps stimulated by the vivid discussion in the *Consolatio*. It might be urged that Troilus's speech is not the only place where he gives utterance to deterministic doctrines: in the *Knight's Tale* we read in the speech of Arcite:

"Allas, why pleynen folk so in commune
Of purveyaunce of God, or of fortune,
That yeveth hem ful ofte in many a gyse
Wel bettre than they can hem-sel devyse?"⁴³

Here again we find, it might be said, that "purveyaunce of god" or Fortune actually do give man's destiny to man, and although this passage too may be fitted dramatically to its setting yet this is the second time that the poet has found an opportunity to express these views. This argument proves unsound, however, when we remember that no one denied that much of man's destiny did come

⁴¹ *Test.*, III, chap. IV, ll. 236-38. Cf. also III, IX, ll. 5-7. Usk was no profound thinker, as one may gather from his account of the origin of evil (ll. 264-7, ch. IV); but after all he was not deadly in earnest in any part of his treatise.

⁴² Bradley suggested that Usk complimented Chaucer in hopes of aid. See *Athen.*, 1897, I, p. 184.

⁴³ A 1251-54.

from God: the Church in fact laid stress on this point as a part of the doctrine of God's grace. The essential part was not to omit the doctrine of man's free will, and it is this omission of which Troilus is peculiarly guilty. In general in regard to the poet's own views, if impressions are to count for anything, I suspect from Chaucer's dismissal of the subject in the *Knight's Tale*, his turning of the argument in the *Troilus*, and his humorous reference to it in the *Nonnes Preestes Tale*, that so far as laymen were concerned, he thought that the subject had been laboured a good deal more than was necessary or fruitful.⁴⁴

I have now dealt with all the points proposed at the beginning of this paper except one. No one apparently has ever felt that Troilus's speech is anything but an anachronism, even if a forgivable one. A distinction should have been made in this criticism, however, in its relation to subject-matter and to method. In regard to the former, I very much doubt whether the accusation is just; for it seems reasonable to suppose that in Trojan times, as much as in the middle ages or in our own day for that matter, there was a discussion of something corresponding to fate and free will. In regard to the method of the speech, one must admit that the system of logic employed seems more characteristic of the Church Fathers than of the Trojan youth. But it must be remembered that the young man of the middle ages probably adopted some of the methods of the scholastics when he had a particular reason to strive for soundness: in his day those methods seemed after all to be the best form, and they certainly represented the form with which he was most familiar.⁴⁵ And can we not go even a step

⁴⁴ After writing this discussion of Chaucer's own ideas, I was interested to find that Fansler in his study of the problem (*Chauc. and the Roman de la Rose*, pp. 210 ff.) had come to practically the same conclusion. In part he says: "We are inclined to judge, however, that for practical living the poet believed in the freedom of man to do right or wrong as he chose." Compare on the other hand B. L. Jefferson, *Chaucer and the Consolation of Philosophy of Boethius*, Princeton Univ. Press, 1917, p. 79 f., who thinks differently.

⁴⁵ The long monologues such as we find in the *Roman de la Rose* are not of point here, because Jean de Meun was simply turning a very neat allegory into an encyclopaedia in the style of the *de Nuptiis* of Martianus Capella. A really analogous case seems to be found in Alexander's speech in Chretien's *Cliges* where he debates the pro's and con's of how love could enter one's heart without wounding one's eyes in the process. Of course the mediaeval epics were not attempting to be true to the ancient spirit, possibly because they had not conceived of such a spirit. The methods of the poets are certainly no more

further? If the speech shows a peculiar earnestness which would naturally express itself in the unusual care in detail and in the repetitiousness so common to the scholastic writings, but which might reveal those same traits in any age even without scholastic influence, its appropriateness then becomes a question of its relation to the mood of the speaker and the charge of anachronism falls to the ground.

To establish this final point in regard to the monologue of Troilus requires considerable delicacy. It must be observed that if I fail to make myself clear in this particular, the points already made will be in no way affected. I have the double difficulty of tracing Chaucer's steps in the operation of a piece of alchemy and of persuading my readers that the final product is gold. I have also that worst task of all—the discovering of humor where none has been seen before. I can only ask the reader first to follow my discussion closely and then with my interpretation in mind to reread the passage in its proper setting in Chaucer.

Let us now see how the speech develops. In his despair Troilus feels that he is "but loren," he goes to the temple to pray and finds no consolation, and his first outburst comes from his feelings, not from his intellect:

"For al that comth, comth by necessitee;
Thus to be lorn, it is my destinee."⁴⁶

to be censured than the methods of the eighteenth century in modernizing Shakspeare. We do not find classical restraint in the lament of Ismène in the *Roman de Thebes*; the inconsistencies of Lydgate are delightful in turning Amphiaras into an "olde bisshop" who goes down to hell, we are told in one place, "only of fate" but later we read: "Lo here the mede of ydolatrie" and thus the devil paid him "for his old outrages." But these elements and this style were familiar to the middle ages, and after all, romance is usually not the worse for a little realism. The process is familiar enough in a composite of Theban and English life in Shakspeare. Professor Kittredge has remarked: "We have already accepted Troilus as a mediaeval knight and a mediaeval lover, and we cannot take umbrage at his praying like a man of the middle ages, or arguing with himself in the mediaeval manner," (*Chaucer and his Poetry*, p. 116.) In part the present paper is a development of the views expressed in Professor Kittredge's book; and before attempting to publish, the writer submitted his article to Mr. Kittredge, who, in response, gave him the benefit of a most generous and detailed criticism.

⁴⁶ IV, ll. 598-599.

First the feeling of his destruction and then of the inevitableness of it; one thought has suggested the other and here is the germ of all that follows. He is glad to have something, especially something external, to accuse; for his chief purpose is to exonerate himself in order to justify his self-pity. So he proceeds, "For certainly, this wot I wel," and the whole game is begun: he remembers the scholastic discussion on the subject, the opposing views, and the possible inferences and conclusions. It is a splendid beginning, humanly real in every way.

He remembers the paradox between the dogma of divine pre-science and that of human free will, and he applies it at once to his own case:

"That for-sight of divyne purveyaunce
Hath seyn alwey me to for-gon Criseyde."⁴⁷

Then, as I have shown, he points out that doubtless God takes human merit into consideration; but the inference of this statement is that, merit or no merit, God has doomed Troilus to destruction and he has had no real fighting chance in the matter. After all, he says, clerks are divided on this subject of destiny and free will: some hold to the one and some to the other. Thereafter follows almost to the end of Troilus's speech a pretty close rendering of the section from Boethius,⁴⁸ and sometimes Chaucer echoes the very language of his own translation, which probably he had already made.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Ll. 961-62.

⁴⁸ TC IV, ll. 974-980 — Chaucer's Boethius, V, pr. III, ll. 7-12; TC ll. 981-987 — B ll. 12-18; TC ll. 988-994 (except for the wording of "fals and foul and wikked corsednesse") — B. ll. 17-19; TC ll. 991-994 — cf. B. ll. 85-89; TC ll. 997-1001 — B. ll. 22-26; TC ll. 1002-1022 (except for "al falle it foule or faire") — B. ll. 26-39; TC ll. 1023-28 — B. ll. 39-41; TC ll. 1030-1043 (except for the shift to the general "you") — B. ll. 41-51; TC ll. 1044-47 — B. ll. 51-53; TC ll. 1051-1078 — B. ll. 53-71. Cf. B. L. Jefferson, *Chaucer and the Cons. of Philos.* etc., p. 139, and pp. 73 ff. It should be noted that the Boethian discussion also appears in the *Roman de la Rose* and that there Reason continues the argument, as in Boethius Philosophy does, to prove the freedom of the human will. See Fansler (*Chaucer and the R. d. l. R.*), pp. 210 ff.

⁴⁹ Cf. especially, TC IV, ll. 985-86 — B. V. pr. III, ll. 15-18; TC ll. 1009-10 — B. ll. 30-32; TC ll. 1016-17 (where he again makes the mistake pointed out by Skeat, *Troilus*, p. 491) — B. ll. 35-36; TC ll. 1045-47 — B. ll. 51-53. See Jefferson, *op. cit.*, pp. 73 ff.

"What clerks," says Troilus, "am I to follow? For some of them say that if God has foreseen everything, then everything must happen according to the way he has foreseen it, and so we have no free will," (ll. 974-980). The next two stanzas are devoted to an elucidation of this argument: if God has perfectly foreseen our deeds and our thoughts, we can have only such deeds and thoughts as He has known we were going to have; otherwise His prescience would be imperfect and we must not believe such heresy as that, (ll. 981-994). Although practically the same statements are found in Boethius, the setting here is of course different and the effect is that of Troilus becoming perhaps wordy and even repetitious but extremely anxious to be logically clear and correct. "Other eminent clerks," he continues, and his reference to them is perhaps just a trifle flippant or bitter:

"Somme
That han hir top ful heigh and smothe y-shore,"⁵⁰

"other eminent clerks hold that prescience is not the cause of the happening of events, but that since something is going to happen, therefore God must foreknow it," (ll. 995-1001). "So necessity falls on the other side of the proposition, (ll. 1002-1008); and the whole issue reduces itself to a matter of the order of causes—whether the prescience of God is the cause of the happening of events, or whether the necessary happening of events is the cause of the prescience," (ll. 1009-1015).

"But," he says, "I will not bother with the order of causes. The upshot of it all, whichever way you take the causes, is the same: I know surely that the happening of things which are foreseen, is necessary, although it may not seem that prescience causes them—for better or worse," (ll. 1016-1022). This stanza introduces the first marked touch of what I have called the dramatic quality of the speech; but if this quality is not clear already, I must make it clearer by analyzing the psychology of Troilus at this part of his argument. Roughly put, his course of thought is as follows: "One school of clerks says that prescience makes the happening of events necessary; another says that the necessary happening of events causes the prescience. In either case (waiving all fine logic) I am sure of one thing anyhow: what is known ahead of time *must* happen—whether foreseeing it causes it or not."

⁵⁰ Ll. 995-96.

The first proposition (of which he says he is sure) he states with dogged determination because it is about that truth that he most cares; and his second proposition—"although it does not seem that prescience causes the events"—is uttered in deference to the logic of the case: in fact, is added somewhat as an afterthought. The total effect to the casual listener is indeed strange: "The fact that something is foreseen means that it must happen, although, if logicians are right, it does not happen because of the fact that it is foreseen"! Such a verbal contradiction, surprising in itself, suits splendidly the dramatic effect of which I am speaking; and yet at the same time, we are able to see by what mental processes Troilus got there. A man does not wilfully leap into such a contradiction. Troilus is arguing very solemnly indeed, determined not to slip, and although perhaps a little conscious that he may seem confusing, he is all the more grim about it. His last desperate "Al falle it foule or faire," shows that he thinks he has gained his point.

He then proceeds to give the figure of one man's sitting on a seat and another man's observing him there. Whether this figure be considered logically sound or not (Troilus substitutes the necessity of the fact of sitting and of seeing for the sureness of divine vision which has no place in this general application of the argument), the figure in each of its two forms must certainly seem highly ludicrous—especially in the wording into which Troilus occasionally stumbles. And here for once, Troilus gets thoroughly confused himself. "If you see a man sitting on a seat, and if he is actually sitting there, then your opinion that he is sitting there must be true." He is now up to his neck in the complexity of the argument; stating the reverse of this case will take very careful thought indeed to make no error in the argument:

"And fether-over now ayenward yit,"

he says. "Beside, notwithstanding this point, however,"—the jargon of a self-conscious beginner in the study of logic and coherence, as any teacher of first-year English will recognize.⁵¹ In

⁵¹ Such jargon is also rather characteristic of scholastic discussion, and perhaps Chaucer had this partly in mind. Compare for example such language as in Bradwardine (DCD, Savile, p. 646 A): "Non est enim propter quid, nec quia, quoniam nec à causa ad effectum nec e contra." The lingo, however intelligible to a professional philosopher in the middle ages, is enough to pro-

Boethius the transition to the other half of the argument is quite simple: "And on the other hand it is also true of the reverse case"—"And ayeinward also is it of the contrarye."⁵² Troilus, however, fights on: "Beside—now—on the other hand—still, just see!—it's exactly the same with the counterpart of this—that is to say," (he gulps once more) "now listen, for I'm not going to take long," (he is talking aloud to himself and forgets the character of his audience⁵³),—"I say," and at last for a moment he is on his feet again.

"And ferther-over now ayenward yit,
Lo, right so it is of the part contrarie,
As thus—now herkne, for I wol not tarie—

I seye, that if," etc. (ll. 1027-30).

voke the irritation and humor of the general reader. Chaucer would not be exactly satirizing scholastic methods if he so copied their weaknesses; he would be merely showing once more that his sense of humor accompanied him wherever he went.

⁵² B. V, pr. III, l. 41.

⁵³ This line has been taken as evidence that "Chaucer through interest in the subject may have forgotten that Troilus is the speaker and momentarily have assumed that position for himself. The inconsistency may also result from Chaucer's overlooking the point in a revision of the poem," Jefferson, *Chaucer and the Cons. of Philos.* etc., p. 75, n. 49. (See also Fansler, *Ch. and the R. d. l. R.*, p. 213.) These explanations seem to me little short of preposterous: they neglect the fact that Chaucer was an artist and generally misinterpret the passage as giving Chaucer's own views. On this last point, however, it is only fair to add a note on a matter discovered by Root in his study of the manuscript evidence on the free will passage (*The Textual Tradition of Chaucer's T.*, pp. 216 ff.) The St. John's Coll. MS Ll has a space between stanzas 154-55 for sixteen stanza spaces with a note in a contemporary hand: "her failleth. thyng yt is nat yt made." The writing, according to Root, seems to be that of the scribe. Perhaps, then, Chaucer did intend to add the rest of the discussion from Boethius; if that is the case, all my interpretation falls to the ground. But perhaps the scribe or some fifteenth century writer intended to do so: the MS contains (in a sixteenth century hand) Henryson's completion of the story in the *Testament of Criseide*. Root offers, however, a still better explanation. He thinks the note and space may go back to an ancestor of the MS in which a larger blank had been left for the entire free will passage; later the eighteen stanzas were written in and the note was not erased. If this is the case, the scribe of this parent MS must have been in very close communication with Chaucer, and Root's ingenious suggestion involves thus its own difficulties. Whatever the explanation of the note, the passage seems finished as it is, and it seems hard to think how Philosophy's reply could be logically incorporated.

If I exaggerate, it is only slightly and I do it to make my point thoroughly clear; for it seems to me a distinct and subtle dramatic touch which should be more generally appreciated.

The figure of the man sitting and of his observer is used, from a logical point of view, to illustrate the argument drawn from the two opposed schools which has already been cited; and the result is the same. "The fact of his sitting may be the cause of the truth of one's seeing him, but necessity plays a part on both sides of the proposition. So in the same way I may reason about God's prescience," (ll. 1023-1047). Then Troilus adds (not from Boethius), "Wherefore men can see that what happens on earth, happens necessarily," (ll. 1048-50).

Having shown the strong element of necessity in human affairs Troilus goes back to the order of causes. To make the conclusion that is of most importance to him, he must restate the whole situation: "Although a thing is foreseen because it is going to happen and does *not* happen because it is foreseen, yet it follows necessarily either that what is to come be foreseen or else that what is foreseen necessarily happen," (ll. 1051-57). This statement would certainly be a staggerer for the casual listener—or we may say, reader! He is simply pointing out once more the necessary part that necessity plays (!), but he does it in what certainly sounds like rubbish or, at best, self-contradiction. The last clause certainly seems impossible after what is granted in the first. Muddled as he seems, however, Troilus is working his way through the involutions and we can see both his way into and his way out of the apparent contradiction. The boy is having a hard time of it, but he gets there! "This necessity in either case destroys our free will. And to return to the order of causes, it would be wrong to say that the happening of temporal events causes God's prescience. What kind of thinking should I be guilty of, if I thought that all the events of the world that have ever happened were the cause of that sovereign Foreknowledge?" (ll. 1058-71).

He has now made his point and made it definitely. But he continues:

"And over al this, yet seye I more herto,"

and he puts this with rather broad confidence, having achieved his goal in his own mind. Then he goes on apparently to repeat the gist of the whole matter once more! "Just as when I know there

is a thing, that thing must necessarily be true; so when I know of a coming event, it must likewise come. And so the happening of events which are foreknown, cannot be avoided," (ll. 1072-78) He repeats all this, to be sure, to take up the alternative problem as to whether God's foreknowledge causes the events, since the reverse is not true; but the proposition is put so weakly that it sounds fallacious (how certain is the knowledge that "I," the speaker, know? Troilus does not give the corrective to this that is found in Boethius) and it gives merely the impression of stating the old argument once more: God foresees events; therefore they must happen; therefore man has no free will.

This argument Troilus has found occasion, for one reason or another, to state about four times.⁵⁴ To one who cannot follow his thought closely (and it would be an unusual reader or listener who could at the first reading!) he seems to repeat his idea of the part played by necessity at least six times.⁵⁵ In a way his logic is straight enough; but the effect of it is at times very much tangled as a result of its presentation in a time of emotional stress. To all intents and purposes he contradicts himself at least twice, although by careful analysis we can see how his mind is moving. In other words, Chaucer shows amazing power in keeping both the dramatic effect and the psychology of his character true. There is the same effect of happy fallacy in Troilus's speech that we find in a solemn and earnest malapropism. Once the boy has succeeded in clearing his mind to his own satisfaction, he stops his argument to call on Jove to have pity on his sorrow or kill him straightway. He has satisfied himself that Jove is running all the affairs of this world: why, then, does not the great god run them *properly*!

Nothing, it seems to me, could be more beautifully adapted to the scene than this speech by Troilus. It is his way of saying "I've never had a chance," and he sets out bravely to prove his case. It is involved and confusing, but the boy gets bravely through with it. He is extraordinarily conscientious at every step, and develops his argument with the most elaborate, the most scrupulous care. *Of course* he would be verbose and repetitious and longwinded. Pandarus does not take the speech (so far as he hears it) as instructive, but comments, "Ey! who seigh ever a

⁵⁴ Ll. 960-966; ll. 978-980; ll. 1056-59; ll. 1076-78.

⁵⁵ Ll. 1002-1008; ll. 1012-1015; ll. 1018-20; ll. 1042-43; ll. 1049-50; ll. 1051-

56.

wys man faren so!" Troilus has certainly been "going on"; and nothing could be more delightful, and, I feel, nothing under the circumstances could be more like a young man—like Troilus.

Certain objections to this interpretation will occur to everyone. It might be urged that we moderns find more fault with this speech than a man in the middle ages would have found. Let us remember in answer to that point, however, that Chaucer himself saw the humor of the tedious *Tale of Melibeus*. Again, I may be reminded that all this speech was taken pretty much as we find it from Boethius. In reply to that, I must say that I have not denied all virtues to the passage. That the argument seems involved or repetitious in the speech of Troilus does not mean that one is to find fault with it for the same reasons in its setting in the *Consolatio*. Chaucer has not represented the full argument as the speaker in Boethius gives it;⁵⁶ and in Boethius the full scholastic apparatus was necessary for logical reasons—there the speaker is fully justified in being so painstaking. Besides, although Chaucer does show a sense of the humor of the *Tale of Melibeus*, he had once seen enough value in it to bother to translate it entire.

I cannot maintain that I have wholly removed the grounds for the charge of anachronism. Troilus refers to "clerks" and mentions a discussion which was really in the air in Chaucer's time. But I hope to have reduced these grounds to a minimum: merely so to say, to the fact that Chaucer does use certain mechanical properties, which to be sure were not genuine antiques, but for the use of which he is no more to be censured than for the fact that Troilus speaks English rather than Aeolic Greek. He takes a discussion which is redolent of the scholastic treatises, although its subject was a common topic of controversy among laymen; but he metamorphoses it into a completely adequate expression of Troilus's personality and feelings. It is one of those obvious and yet felicitous strokes of which a genius is so strangely capable and in the effecting of which it is worth while to watch the genius at work.

⁵⁶ Boethius takes up the matter of man's imperfect knowledge in relation to the discussion of prescience in general; (ll. 71-85); and he relates the whole matter to vice and virtue, as I have pointed out above. Compared with the argument in Boethius, Chaucer's is in part much more compact, but that does not affect the impression it gives of being extremely repetitious and verbose in its narrative setting and (with some of Chaucer's changes) of being very much confused.

The result shows an almost unparalleled example of Chaucer's balance in his just comprehension of tragedy and his gentle sense of humor.

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